



HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Democratic Caucus

The Honorable John M. Spratt Jr. ■ Ranking Democratic Member

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Despite Their Denials, Republicans Support Veterans Benefit Cuts

Dear Democratic Colleague:

House Republicans are attempting to hide their efforts to cut veterans benefits by accusing Democrats of distorting their record. But the facts speak for themselves. On March 12, Republicans on the Budget Committee all voted for a ten-year budget resolution cutting mandatory veterans benefits by \$14.5 billion and appropriated veterans programs by \$15.0 billion below current services. Then on March 21, Republicans voted on the House floor for a budget resolution containing cuts of nearly equal size—cuts to mandatory veterans benefits of \$14.1 billion and cuts to appropriated veterans programs of \$14.2 billion below current services. Not only were these cuts less than the amount needed to maintain current services, they were also less than what the President asked for in his budget.

Fact: The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that in order to provide the same services provided in 2003, appropriated veterans programs require \$316.7 billion for the ten-year period (2004-2013). Mandatory veterans programs require \$381.7 billion over ten years to provide services required under current law.

Fact: The House Republican budget cut nearly \$30 billion from veterans programs for 2004-2013: \$14.2 billion in appropriated funding (such as medical care and burial benefits) and \$14.1 billion in entitlement spending (such as compensation and pensions).

	CBO Says Veterans Programs Require	House Republicans Provide	
		In Committee	On House Floor
2004-2013 Appropriations	\$316.7 billion	\$301.7 billion (\$15.0 billion cut)	\$302.6 billion (\$14.2 billion cut)
2004-2013 Entitlements	\$381.7 billion	\$367.2 billion (\$14.5 billion cut)	\$367.6 billion (\$14.1 billion cut)

The budget resolution conference report includes \$6.2 billion over ten years in cuts to appropriated veterans benefits, but it drops the earlier cuts to mandatory veterans programs. While the House Republican budget resolution claimed these mandatory cuts were needed to reduce “waste, fraud, and abuse,” the proposal generated widespread opposition. On April 1 the House voted overwhelmingly (399-22) to pass a Democratic motion instructing conferees to drop the mandatory cuts. Even most Republicans reversed their earlier votes by supporting the Democratic motion.

In this context, this week’s renewed Republican effort to cut mandatory veterans benefits in the name of “waste, fraud, and abuse” seems especially misguided. The Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee has been instructed to identify \$3.9 billion in budget cuts to veterans programs over the 2004-13 period; the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee will likely be issued a similar instruction.

Cutting veterans benefits to pay for oversized tax cuts simply reflects the wrong priorities for our nation.

Sincerely,

/s/

John M. Spratt, Jr.

Ranking Democratic Member